
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Office for Statistics Regulation

Victoria Obudulu
Head of Profession for Statistics
UK Health Security Agency
(by email)

7 November 2024

Dear Victoria

Alternative release time for weekly all-cause mortality surveillance reports

Thank you for your correspondence (Annex to this letter) regarding the release time for the UKHSA's [Weekly all-cause mortality surveillance reports](#). We appreciate the engagement with you and your team following this letter to clarify the background to these statistics. As you explained, these reports were previously published by Public Health England, with a long-standing practice of publishing at 2pm. Having taken over publication of the surveillance reports, we are supportive of your decision to regard these outputs as official statistics and to bring them fully in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics. We also understand your reasons for wanting to continue publishing the statistics at 2pm and are assured that you are seeking to maintain the quality of the statistics while also enabling their timely and orderly release, and coherence with other UKHSA outputs.

The release time of 2pm supports a variety of users and uses of the statistics, including international uses. I am therefore content you have demonstrated that the alternative release time enables these statistics to continue to serve the public good and I approve your request to continue to publish at 2pm.

Yours sincerely



Ed Humpherson
Director General for OSR

Annex: correspondence from Victoria Obudulu dated 24 October 2024

Dear Ed,

In line with your [policy for alternative release times for official statistics](#), I am writing to formally request an alternative release time of 2pm for the [Weekly all-cause mortality surveillance reports](#).

UKHSA is a partner member of the [European Mortality Monitoring \(EuroMOMO\)](#) network set up to detect and measure, on a near real-time basis, excess number of deaths across participating European countries.

Like all other member countries, UKHSA analyses mortality data for England and Wales using a standardised EuroMOMO algorithm developed by the network to monitor mortality and signals of excess deaths. Key findings from this analysis of data for England and Wales are published as official statistics in the weekly all-cause mortality surveillance reports.

Aggregate data outputs from UKHSA's analysis are also shared with EuroMOMO analysts based at Statens Serum Institut in Denmark who collate and centrally publish a weekly bulletin covering all participating countries. [Weekly EuroMOMO bulletin updates](#) are published each Thursday and provide a source of surveillance data used by health organisations, such as the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), to monitor early indications of excess death incidents and any patterns of concern across European countries.

There is public value in the release of both sets of statistics, though the provision of data for inclusion in the weekly EuroMOMO bulletins creates challenge for the statistics production team to meet the standard 9:30am release time for the weekly all-cause mortality surveillance reports. I believe that a 2pm release time for these statistics is necessary for the following reasons:

To balance assured quality with timeliness. The latest weekly data for all deaths in England and Wales is supplied by the [General Register Office](#) early on a Wednesday morning and outputs are published on Thursday. The production timescales for these official statistics are currently compressed to 1.5 days to align with the production and release of the weekly EuroMOMO surveillance data. Publishing these statistics at 9:30am on Thursday will further compress the time available to process the data and will increase the risk of the statistics not meeting the quality standards expected of official statistics.

To support orderly release of the statistics. The related EuroMOMO statistics are published on a Thursday afternoon. There is not a fixed release time for the EuroMOMO statistics, and the timing of release is outside of UKHSA's control. A Thursday release of the weekly all-cause mortality surveillance reports enables alignment with the release of the European statistics as best as possible and allows any UKHSA public health messaging about the two outputs to be made available on the same afternoon. As outlined above, a 9:30am release on a Thursday is not practical, and so a 2pm release on a Thursday better supports the orderly release of these statistics than, for example, a Friday release at the standard time of 9:30am.

To align with other UKHSA statistics with alternative release times. Other related UKHSA statistics with an alternative release time approved by the Office for Statistics Regulation are published at 2pm on a Thursday. Applying the same alternative release time to these statistics enables more coherent communication of statistical messages.

Yours sincerely

Victoria Obudulu